

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 3426

STATE FOR ARA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AR, US
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VIDELA'S FAREWELL ASADO FOR AMBASSADOR AND MRS HILL

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT AND MRS VIDELA HOSTED A SMALL FAREWELL ASADO FOR AMBASSADOR AND MRS HILL ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, 7 MAY. ALSO ATTENDING WERE FOUR SENIOR GENERALS AND THEIR WIVES, THE U.S. DEFENSE ATTACHE AND WIFE, AND FIVE OF THE SIX VIDELA CHILDREN. CONVERSATION WAS NON-SUBSTANTIVE, AND THE GUESTS, WHO REPRESENT BOTH HARDLINE AND MODERATE FACTIONS, SHARED IN A VERY CONGENIAL AFTERNOON.

2. ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON, 7 MAY, AMBASSADOR AND MRS HILL ATTENDED AN ASADO GIVEN IN THEIR HONOR AT PRESIDENT VIDELA'S HOME IN CAMPO DE MAYO. THE AFFAIR WAS ATTENDED BY MAJOR GENERAL AND MRS URICARRIET (DIRECTOR, MILITARY FACTORIES), MAJOR GENERAL AND MRS RIVEROS (COMMANDER OF MILITARY INSTITUTES AND CAMPO DE MAYO), MAJOR GENERAL AND MRS SUAREZ MASON (I CORPS COMMANDER) AND BRIGADIER GENERAL VAQUERO (DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY APPARENTLY REPRESENTING ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VIOLA WHO WAS OFFICIATING AT A CEREMONY AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY). FIVE OF THE SIX VIDELA CHILDREN AND TWO GRANDCHILDREN WERE PRESENT. THE ABSENT
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SON IS AN ARMY LIEUTENANT STATIONED IN MENDOZA. COLONEL AND MRS COUGHLIN (U.S. DEFENSE ATTACHE) ALSO ATTENDED.

3. WHEN AMBASSADOR AND MRS HILL ARRIVED, THEY WERE GREETED BY MRS VIDELA IN THE GARDEN IN THE ATTRACTIVE "QUINCHO" (COVERED PATIO). THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN DELAYED IN THE TRAFFIC BECAUSE OF THE RAIN, BUT ARRIVED SHORTLY THEREAFTER LOOKING DAPPER AND

RELAXED IN A BLUE BLAZER WITH CONTRASTING SLACKS. ONLY A FEW MINUTES EARLIER THE PRESIDENT HAD RECEIVED WORD OF THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER, VADM GUZZETTI. ALTHOUGH ALL PRESENT WERE DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S CONDITION, THE ASADO CONTINUED IN A VERY CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE INTERRUPTED ONLY TWICE BY TELEPHONE CALLS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

4. CONVERSATION RANGED OVER MANY TOPICS PRACTICALLY NONE OF WHICH WERE SUBSTANTIVE. THE PRESIDENT TOUCHED LIGHTLY ON HIS PLANNED TRIP TO VENEZUELA (11-14 MAY) POINTING OUT THAT HE HAD BEEN THERE LAST YEAR AS ARMY COMMANDER, BUT THAT THIS WOULD BE HIS FIRST TRIP AS PRESIDENT. HE ADDED THAT VENEZUELA IS A VERY COMPLEX COUNTRY IN WHICH THE MILITARY CONTINUE TO PLAY A VERY INFLUENTIAL ROLE.

COMMENT: EARLY IN THE LUNCHEON IT BECAME QUITE CLEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT DESIRE TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS. IN FACT, ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION HE MENTIONED THAT THE OFFICIAL FAREWELL TO THE AMBASSADOR HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE CASA ROSADA THE PREVIOUS TUESDAY (MEMCON BEING FORWARDED) AND THAT SATURDAY'S ASADO WAS INTENDED AS A PERSONAL FAREWELL FOR THE HILLS. CLEARLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE CONVERSATION WAS THE PRESIDENT'S SELECTION OF GUESTS. SEATED AROUND THE ROUND LUNCHEON TABLE WERE TWO OF THE "HARDLINE" GENERALS, SUAREZ MASON AND RIVEROS, THE POLITICALLY NEUTRAL MILITARY ENGINEER AND HEAD OF MILITARY FACTORIES, GENERAL URICARRIET, AND GENERAL VAQUERO REPRESENTING THE MODERATE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF VIOLA. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS ATTEMPTING TO DEMONSTRATE THAT, DESPITE OFTEN PUBLICIZED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE HARD AND MODERATE MILITARY

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FACTIONS, THE GENERALS REMAIN CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS AND ARE RELATIVELY UNIFIED. THAT THEY ALL HAVE GREAT PERSONAL RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT VIDELA WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT. HOWEVER, THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS AT ALL THAT GENERALS SUAREZ MASON AND RIVEROS HAD SOFTENED THEIR POSITIONS.

HILL

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